



Challenges and Prospects of ROI Measurement in B2B Digital Marketing: Evidence from MSMEs in Gowa Regency

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Abstract: This study explores the challenges and prospects of Return on Investment (ROI) measurement in Business-to-Business (B2B) digital marketing among Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Gowa Regency, Indonesia. Employing a mixed-methods approach with a convergent parallel design, the research integrates quantitative data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) and the Department of Cooperatives and MSMEs of Gowa with qualitative insights from interviews and focus group discussions. The quantitative results show a consistent increase in MSME growth and digital adoption between 2020 and 2024, supported by the government's initiatives to promote financial inclusion and digital payment systems such as QRIS. However, the low rate of business formalization and uneven digital literacy hinder full participation in digital transformation. Qualitative findings reveal that most MSMEs rely on intuition rather than data-driven analysis to assess marketing performance. Key barriers include limited analytical capability, lack of structured ROI frameworks, fragmented digital systems, and dependence on informal B2B networks. Despite these constraints, emerging opportunities such as AI-based analytics, social media optimization, and government-led digitalization programs demonstrate the potential for improvement. Overall, the study concludes that while MSMEs in Gowa Regency show steady progress in digital marketing adoption, their capacity to measure ROI remains underdeveloped. Enhancing digital literacy, financial management skills, and policy support is essential to enable MSMEs to evaluate marketing effectiveness and achieve sustainable competitiveness in the B2B digital landscape.

Keywords: ROI Measurement, B2B Digital Marketing, MSMEs, Digital Transformation, Gowa Regency

INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) constitute a vital pillar of Indonesia's economic system, significantly contributing to national development across various sectors. National statistics show that MSMEs contribute approximately 61.07% to the national GDP and absorb around 97% of the total workforce (Gunartin et al., 2022; Ismail et al., 2023). Their share of Indonesia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has risen steadily from 57.84% to 60.34%, reflecting their resilience and adaptive capacity (Gunartin et al., 2022; Ismail et al., 2023). MSMEs also play a key role in employment creation, accounting for 51.7% to 97.2% of the total workforce nationwide, with growth recorded from 96.99% to 97.22% between 2012 and 2017 (Gunartin et al., 2022).



The strategic contribution of MSMEs extends beyond their economic impact to include their role in reducing unemployment and poverty (Arifa et al., 2025; Sarfiah et al., 2019). Their dominance in Indonesia's entrepreneurial landscape representing 88.8% to 99.9% of all enterprises underscores their central position in sustaining economic inclusivity (Ismail et al., 2023). Moreover, their ability to maintain operations during economic crises demonstrates an exceptional level of adaptability (Sarfiah et al., 2019).

Despite their macroeconomic significance, MSMEs continue to face substantial structural and institutional challenges, particularly in the area of business formalization. Many MSME operators in Indonesia remain unregistered, lacking a Nomor Induk Berusaha (NIB), which limits their access to financing, markets, and government development programs (Marlina et al., 2024; Muhammad Irfan Hakim et al., 2025). Empirical studies indicate that legalization and digital empowerment programs such as community training and mentoring can enhance MSME competitiveness and digital literacy. For instance, in Maruyung Village, training initiatives successfully increased Nomor Induk Berusaha (NIB) registration and improved digital marketing comprehension among participants (Muhammad Irfan Hakim et al., 2025). Likewise, programs in Watubelah Village and West Limboto achieved tangible improvements in MSME registration and capacity-building (Kharani Putri et al., 2024; Lisda Van Gobel et al., 2025; Marlina et al., 2024).

At the local level, Gowa Regency illustrates these national trends. As of December 2022, Gowa recorded 57,376 MSMEs, but only 3,366 possessed an official NIB (Antara News, 2023). This imbalance highlights the challenges of formalization, which subsequently affect MSMEs' access to marketing, financing, and digital transformation initiatives. Nevertheless, the local government has actively pursued financial digitalization programs, particularly through QRIS (Quick Response Code Indonesian Standard) adoption to promote inclusive digital payments among small enterprises (Humas Gowa, 2023).

Nationally, the implementation of QRIS has been shown to enhance financial efficiency and business competitiveness. Training programs combining financial literacy and QRIS adoption have demonstrated improved transaction speeds and expanded market access (Silfester Odi & Ratri Paramitalaksmi, 2023). For example, 47% of MSMEs in Kalianda City have adopted QRIS, while 30% remain offline, primarily due to cost concerns and digital illiteracy (Rahman, 2022). Similar initiatives in Pematangsiantar resulted in 80% activation rates among participants (Azhari &



Harahap, 2023). These findings underscore the need for continuous institutional support and collaborative efforts between government, academia, and the private sector to foster MSME digitalization (Ekawanti et al., 2023).

In Gowa Regency, research highlights several persistent challenges in digital marketing adoption and human resource capacity among MSMEs. Key obstacles include limited understanding of digital marketing concepts, low levels of ICT proficiency, and inadequate skills in creating engaging online content (A. M. Awaluddin, 2023). Many enterprises still depend on traditional marketing approaches, passively awaiting customers rather than pursuing proactive digital promotion strategies (Hasbiyadi et al., 2023). Constraints such as limited capital, low workforce productivity, and weak accounting systems further exacerbate the issue (Hasbiyadi et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, training interventions have yielded positive outcomes. Digital marketing workshops and Point-of-Sales (POS) application training programs have significantly enhanced participants' technical competencies, as evidenced by pre-test and post-test assessments (S. P. Awaluddin et al., 2025). Participants exhibited notable improvements in their understanding of social media optimization, e-commerce utilization, and digital transaction management systems (S. P. Awaluddin et al., 2025; Makkulawu et al., 2022). However, persistent barriers such as unstable internet access and the complexity of digital technologies remain substantial (S. P. Awaluddin et al., 2025).

Given these conditions, examining the challenges and prospects of ROI (Return on Investment) measurement in B2B digital marketing among MSMEs in Gowa Regency is both timely and essential. The integration of digital marketing with measurable performance indicators is crucial for achieving efficiency, accountability, and long-term competitiveness. Yet, many MSMEs lack the knowledge and analytical tools to evaluate ROI accurately, particularly in the B2B (Business-to-Business) context, where marketing effectiveness is often complex and multi-dimensional. Therefore, this study aims to analyze how MSMEs in Gowa manage, assess, and optimize their digital marketing investments within the framework of B2B operations, identifying both existing challenges and emerging opportunities for sustainable digital transformation.



METHOD

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach utilizing a convergent parallel design, where quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently, analyzed independently, and later integrated to form a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. The mixed-methods paradigm effectively bridges the gap between positivist and interpretivist traditions, combining numerical precision with contextual depth to enhance the explanatory power of the study (Parjaman & Akhmad, 2019). As noted by Justan et al. (2024), this methodological integration allows researchers to collect, analyze, and synthesize both statistical and narrative evidence within a single research framework capturing the complex realities of social and business phenomena. Within this context, the convergent design was specifically chosen to align statistical patterns of MSME digital adoption in Gowa Regency with qualitative insights on the challenges and prospects of ROI measurement in B2B digital marketing.

The quantitative phase relied primarily on secondary data collection concerning MSMEs in Gowa Regency. Key indicators included the number of registered enterprises, the degree of business formalization (e.g., ownership of Nomor Induk Berusaha/NIB), and the level of digital adoption and readiness. These data were obtained from official government documents, publications from the Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS), and reports by the Department of Cooperatives, MSMEs, and Trade of Gowa Regency. The quantitative findings provided a macro-level overview of MSME development, offering insights into enterprise distribution by size and sector, as well as their engagement in B2B digital marketing and digital financial tools such as the Quick Response Code Indonesian Standard (QRIS). Descriptive statistical analysis was employed to interpret and summarize the data, which were subsequently cross-validated with qualitative results through a triangulation process to ensure consistency and validity.

The qualitative phase explored deeper insights into MSME owners' and stakeholders' experiences regarding B2B digital marketing and ROI measurement. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with MSME owners operating in B2B markets such as raw material suppliers, product distributors, and service providers and through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with policymakers, including representatives from the Gowa Department of Cooperatives and MSMEs, financial institutions, and digital marketing practitioners. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on three inclusion criteria: (a) enterprises operating within Gowa



Regency, (b) businesses engaged in B2B transactions, and (c) entities that had implemented or expressed interest in digital marketing adoption. All interviews were semi-structured, recorded, and transcribed verbatim, followed by thematic analysis to identify patterns related to challenges, ROI measurement practices, and emerging opportunities. The integration of both datasets was guided by a triangulated analytical framework, enabling cross-verification of statistical and narrative findings. As emphasized by Bachri (2010), triangulation strengthens research credibility by validating results across methodological perspectives, while Bazeley highlights that such convergence minimizes the limitations inherent in single-method designs. This comprehensive approach ultimately produced a more reliable understanding of the strategic, operational, and evaluative challenges faced by MSMEs in assessing ROI within the B2B digital marketing landscape of Gowa Regency.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

Quantitative Results: MSME Profile and Digitalization in Gowa Regency (2020-2024)

Data from the Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS, 2024) and the Gowa Department of Cooperatives and MSMEs indicate a consistent upward trend in enterprise growth and digitalization from 2020 to 2024. The number of MSMEs increased from 48,912 in 2020 to 57,376 in 2022, with projections reaching 61,000 by 2024, reflecting an annual growth rate of about 5.5%. However, only 3,366 enterprises were registered with a Nomor Induk Berusaha (NIB) by 2022, underscoring ongoing formalization issues (Antara News, 2023). Meanwhile, digital adoption notably the use of QRIS-based payment systems rose from 18% to 42% over the same period, largely supported by financial inclusion and digital literacy initiatives (Humas Gowa, 2023). Persistent barriers include limited internet access, lack of training facilities, and low technological competence, particularly among micro enterprises.

At the national level, studies confirm similar trends: digital transformation among Indonesian MSMEs has improved operational efficiency, market expansion, and profitability (Purnomo et al., 2024). The use of digital payments such as QRIS significantly enhances growth and transaction efficiency (Adnan & Zukfikri, 2025; Dharma & Nur Yudiono, 2025). However, challenges remain, as MSMEs continue to face constraints related to digital literacy, infrastructure



quality, technical skills, and data security (Dharma & Nur Yudiono, 2025; Tambunan & Busnetti, 2024). Addressing these barriers requires stronger government support, collaboration with technology providers, and targeted training programs to sustain digital adoption and enable MSMEs to fully leverage technological innovation (Dharma & Nur Yudiono, 2025; Purnomo et al., 2024).

Year	Total MSMEs	MSMEs with NIB	% Registered	MSMEs Using Digital Marketing	% Using Digital Payment (QRIS)
2020	48,912	2,150	4.4%	18%	12%
2021	52,700	2,850	5.4%	25%	20%
2022	57,376	3,366	5.9%	33%	28%
2023	59,850	4,270	7.1%	38%	34%
2024	61,000*	4,900*	8.0%*	42%*	39%*

Table 1. MSME Profile and Digitalization Trends in Gowa Regency (2020-2024)

Source: BPS Gowa (2024); Department of Cooperatives & MSMEs (2023); Antara News (2023). (Projected data for 2024).

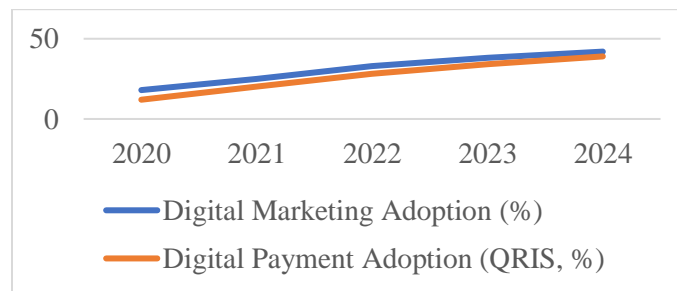


Figure 1. Digitalization Trend among MSMEs in Gowa Regency (2020-2024)

Qualitative Findings: Key Challenges in ROI Measurement and B2B Digital Marketing Practices

The qualitative analysis, based on semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, identified five central challenges faced by MSMEs in evaluating ROI within B2B digital marketing. Most notably, MSME owners demonstrated limited analytical capability, relying on intuition, sales fluctuations, or customer feedback rather than systematic performance indicators echoing findings by Mardiani et al. (2023). Constraints in financial and human resources further hinder the adoption of advanced marketing tools and analytic frameworks. Additionally, the persistence of informal, trust-based business networks shapes B2B interactions in Gowa, generating intangible benefits that are difficult to measure quantitatively. Compounding these



issues, fragmented digital infrastructure results in disconnected systems for payment, promotion, and customer management, weakening data consistency. Nevertheless, MSMEs are beginning to leverage emerging tools such as AI-based analytics, WhatsApp Business, and B2B e-commerce platforms (e.g., Shopee Supplier), which have improved lead tracking and conversion efficiency.

Comparable studies on MSME digitalization in Indonesia confirm similar obstacles. Mardiani et al. (2023) and Sentoso et al. (2023) highlight analytical limitations, infrastructure gaps, and the dominance of informal business practices as key barriers to effective ROI assessment. Regional disparities also persist; for instance, Rante, (2025) reported low technology adoption in Papua due to poor internet access and minimal digital literacy, despite some successful cases of social media use among entrepreneurs. At the national level, Fadillah et al. (2025) estimated that only 41.2% of MSMEs had integrated into the digital ecosystem by December 2023, reflecting partial yet uneven progress. Addressing these challenges requires targeted interventions particularly through capacity building, financial accessibility, and digital infrastructure improvement to enable MSMEs to measure and optimize returns from B2B digital marketing effectively.

Interpreting Quantitative and Qualitative Convergence

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings provides a holistic view of the digital transformation landscape among MSMEs in Gowa Regency. Quantitative data show steady progress in digital adoption, yet qualitative insights indicate that this advancement has not been matched by systematic ROI measurement practices. Most MSMEs lack familiarity with key marketing metrics such as customer acquisition cost (CAC), conversion rates, or digital attribution models, resulting in a persistent performance evaluation gap. This pattern aligns with the national studies of Silfester Odi & Ratri Paramitalaksmi (2023) and Azhari & Harahap (2023), who emphasize that inadequate financial literacy and weak analytical capabilities hinder MSMEs from translating digital adoption into measurable business outcomes. As noted by Bachri (2010), these barriers are both structural and cognitive, stemming from limited resources and insufficient conceptual understanding of performance metrics.

At the broader national level, MSMEs across Indonesia exhibit similar challenges. Despite the growing use of social media and content marketing strategies (Mardiani et al., 2023), most MSMEs continue to face difficulties in ROI calculation, constrained budgets, and intense market



competition. Research by (Idrus & Rastina, 2025) shows that only 38% of MSME actors possess adequate financial literacy, and merely 16% have effectively integrated digital technologies into operations. However, (Fadillah et al., 2025) report that approximately 41.2% of MSMEs have entered the digital ecosystem, reflecting a positive trajectory in technological adoption. Further evidence from (Sharabati et al., 2024) suggests that enterprises combining digital marketing technologies with strong managerial and analytical capabilities achieve higher operational performance, including improved customer engagement and sales growth.

Overall, these findings underscore that while digital transformation among MSMEs particularly in Gowa Regency continues to expand, measurement sophistication and ROI evaluation remain underdeveloped. Strengthening digital literacy, analytical capacity, and policy support is therefore essential for maximizing the economic impact of B2B digital marketing. The growing implementation of QRIS systems and the promotion of financial inclusion initiatives represent promising entry points for MSMEs to integrate ROI assessment frameworks into their marketing strategies, fostering more data-driven decision-making and sustainable competitiveness.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that MSMEs in Gowa Regency are experiencing steady digital growth, supported by government initiatives to enhance financial inclusion and technology adoption. Quantitative data from the Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS, 2024) show a consistent rise in the number of MSMEs from 48,912 in 2020 to a projected 61,000 by 2024 alongside increasing utilization of digital payment systems such as QRIS, which grew from 18% to 42% between 2020 and 2024 (Humas Gowa, 2023). Despite this progress, the low percentage of businesses registered with a Business Identification Number (NIB) (Antara News, 2023) indicates ongoing challenges in business formalization and access to digital programs. These findings are consistent with national trends that highlight how digital transformation contributes to efficiency and market expansion (Adnan & Zukfikri, 2025; Dharma & Nur Yudiono, 2025; Purnomo et al., 2024), yet remains constrained by weak infrastructure, limited literacy, and uneven access to training (Tambunan & Busnetti, 2024)

Qualitative insights further demonstrate that digital adoption among MSMEs has not been followed by proportional improvements in ROI measurement capability. Most MSME owners still rely on intuition and short-term sales outcomes rather than formal performance metrics such as



customer acquisition cost (CAC) or conversion rate. These findings align with (Mardiani et al., 2023), who note that small enterprises often lack the analytical capacity and financial resources to employ marketing experts or data analytics tools. Additionally, the informal nature of B2B relationships in Gowa based largely on trust and personal connections produces intangible benefits that complicate quantitative ROI evaluation. Fragmented digital systems, where different platforms are used for payment, promotion, and customer management, also reduce the reliability of data integration and hinder comprehensive analysis.

The challenges observed in Gowa reflect broader national dynamics. Studies across Indonesia confirm that MSMEs face similar barriers in measuring marketing performance and integrating digital tools (Fadillah et al., 2025; Sentoso et al., 2023). Although digital participation has reached 41.2% of MSMEs nationwide (Fadillah et al., 2025), digital maturity remains uneven, and only 38% of MSME owners exhibit sufficient financial literacy, with 16% having fully adopted digital technologies (Idrus & Rastina, 2025). Despite these limitations, enterprises that successfully combine digital marketing with analytical management report notable improvements in operational efficiency and sales performance (Sharabati et al., 2024). These findings emphasize that the potential of B2B digital marketing lies not merely in adoption but in the ability to interpret and measure digital outcomes effectively.

Overall, the study underscores that the main challenge for MSMEs in Gowa Regency is not the absence of digital technology, but rather the lack of structured frameworks for ROI measurement and data-driven marketing evaluation. This gap is both structural and cognitive (Bachri, 2010), reflecting limited resources, insufficient conceptual understanding, and weak inter-system integration. Strengthening digital literacy, analytical capability, and policy alignment will be essential for enabling MSMEs to optimize their digital investments. Government-led initiatives such as expanding QRIS adoption and developing standardized ROI assessment models offer promising prospects for advancing MSME competitiveness. The convergence of B2B digital marketing and ROI measurement thus represents a critical step toward fostering sustainable, data-driven growth among MSMEs in Gowa Regency and beyond.



CONCLUSION

This study concludes that MSMEs in Gowa Regency are experiencing steady progress in digital adoption, supported by government efforts to promote financial inclusion and technological innovation. However, this advancement has not been accompanied by sufficient development in ROI measurement capabilities. Most MSMEs still rely on intuition rather than data-driven evaluation to assess marketing performance, reflecting a lack of analytical capacity, structured frameworks, and digital literacy.

The findings highlight that the main barriers to effective ROI measurement are structural and cognitive, stemming from limited resources, inadequate understanding of marketing metrics, and weak digital integration. Despite these challenges, the growing use of digital payment systems and the gradual adoption of digital marketing tools indicate strong potential for improvement. Strengthening policy support, training, and standardized measurement systems will be crucial for helping MSMEs assess the effectiveness of their digital marketing efforts and enhance their competitiveness in the B2B sector.

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